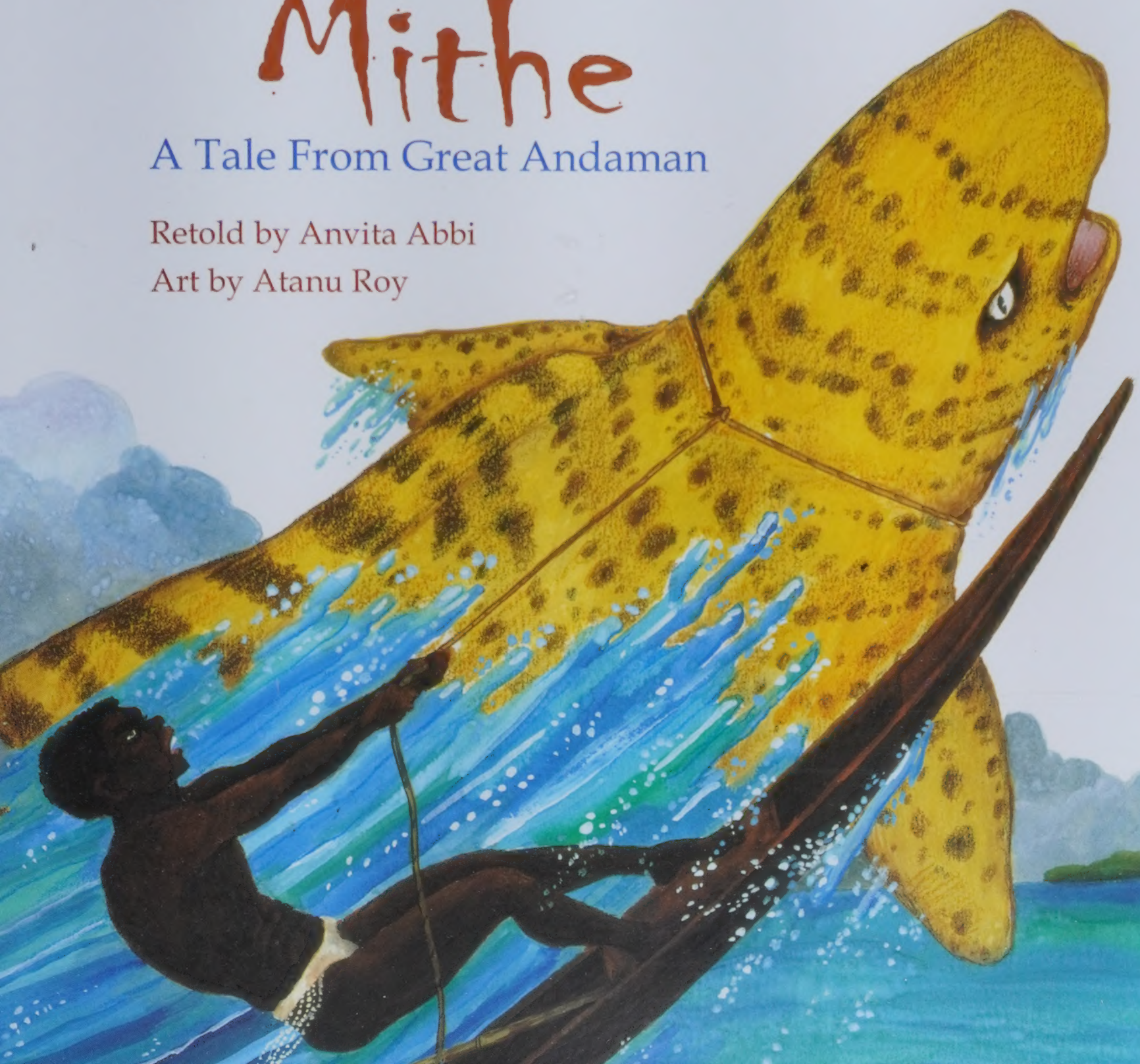
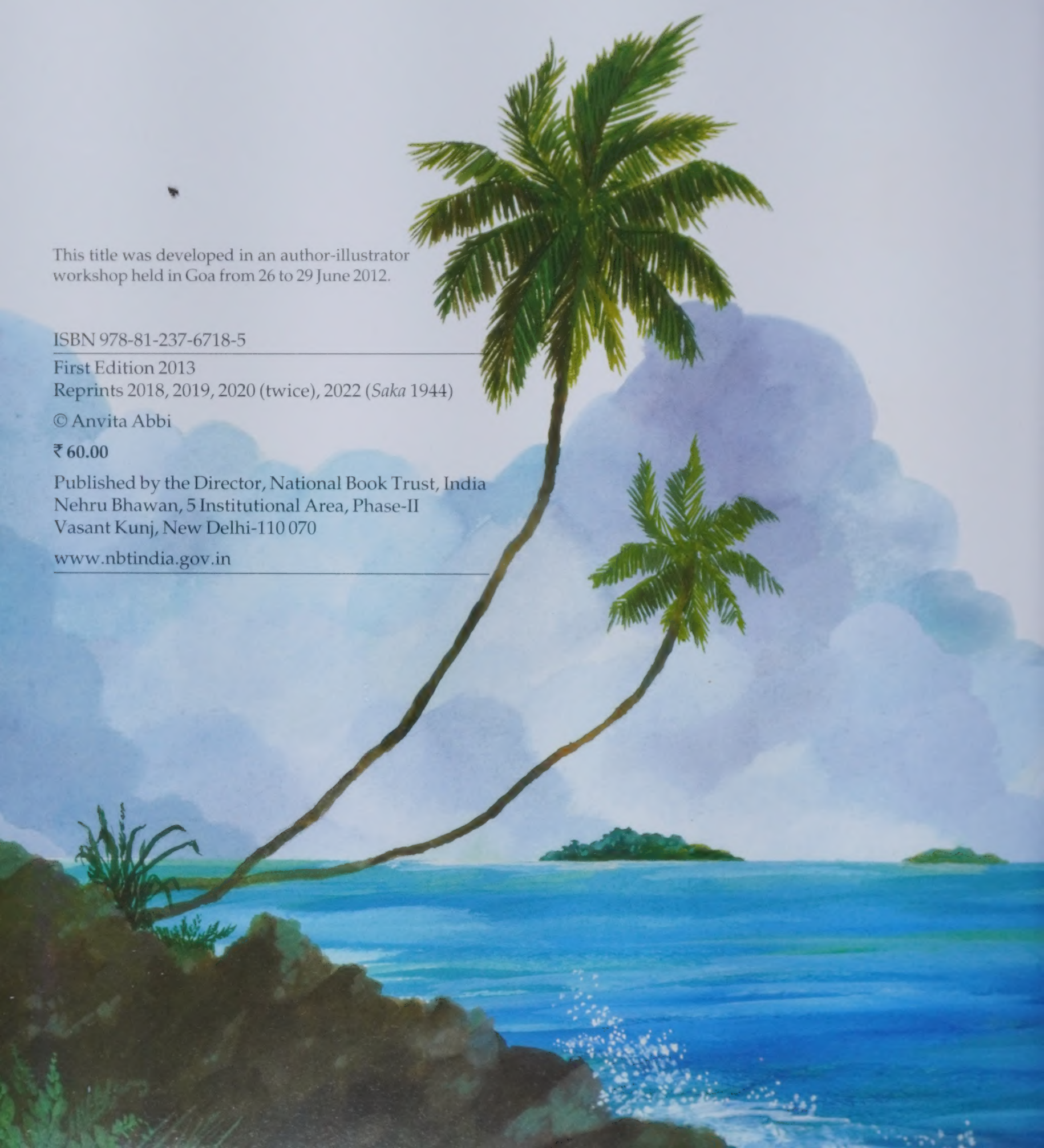
# Jiro Mithe

## A Tale From Great Andaman

Retold by Anvita Abbi

Art by Atanu Roy





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# Jiro Mithe

*A Popular tale from Andaman. It tells us why the great Andamanese consider birds as their ancesters and refrain from eating them. Narrated by Nao Jr.*

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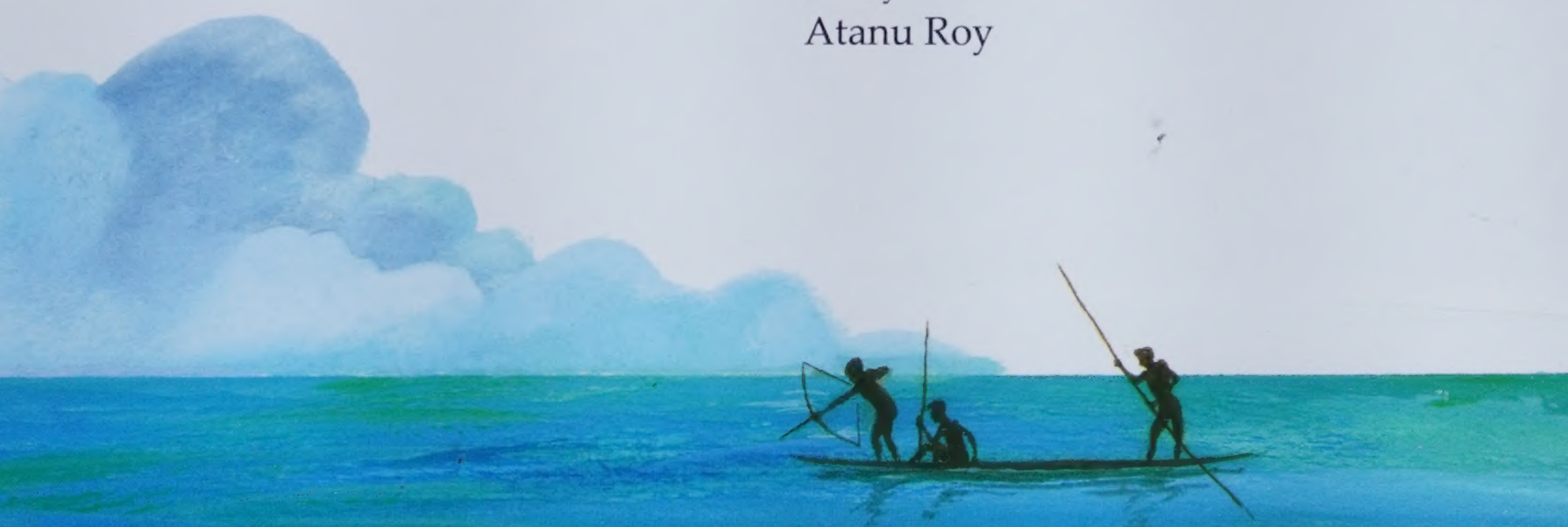

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Jiro Mithe was a young boy from the Jero tribe of the Andaman Islands. He was fond of hunting in the sea.

Once, as usual, he went to hunt in the sea. At first he was disappointed. After sometime, however, he found and killed a worm called 'Khata'. He sat down on the sandy beach in a crouching position to clean it. But the more he cleaned, the bigger it became! Finally Jiro swallowed the whole Khata.

Suddenly a large fish called 'Bol' sprang out of the sea and swallowed Jiro. Bol is known to swallow big animals. Jiro wondered what happened! He did not realize that he was inside a Bol. He felt constricted inside the tight and slimy space and could not move his limbs.

When he did not return home, his family started worrying. They went looking for him along the sea shore and found the remains of the Khata and his bow and arrow lying nearby.

They searched for long but to no avail. At last, they decided that 'he must have been eaten by the Bol.'

Before long, three brave young men Phatka, Benge and Kaulo from the village set out to sea to hunt the Bol. They knew that the Bol could not have gone far with a full stomach heavy with Jiro. Soon they spotted a trail of dirty water in the sea.

"See the dirty trail the Bol has left behind," Phatka said.

"Yes, now we can trace its track," said Kaulo.

Benge nodded in agreement.

Phatka was asked to trace the Bol as he was the cleverest of all. So he rowed further into the sea. Benge followed him.

Soon Phatka found the fish with bulging belly. In fact, from the outline of the bulge, Phatka could make out the figure of Jiro in a crouching position.

He tried to kill the Bol with a long bamboo but did not succeed. Benge tried too but failed. They then decided to seek Kaulo's help and started calling out to him, "Kauloooooo! . . . Kauloooooo!"

Kaulo heard their voices and thought, "Oh! They must have found Jiro." He started rowing towards them.

"Where is he?" asked Kaulo.

"There he is, there he is," they said, pointing at the bulging belly of the Bol.

"Look for its head. It must be inside the sand," exclaimed Kaulo.

All of them could see the head hidden in the sand.

"We must hit the head of the Bol. If we hit anywhere else, Jiro will be hurt," declared Kaulo.

Kaulo aimed the long bamboo and hit the Bol's head really hard. In great pain, the Bol started swimming away as fast as it could.

Kaulo advised Phatka and Benge to tie the boats together so that the Bol could not overturn them. This also helped in hunting the fish. Then, in a clever move, Kaulo quickly threw a rope and snared the Bol. Then he tugged hard at the rope. The fish became still.

They tied the Bol securely to the side of the boat and brought it to the shore. Thereafter, with great care Kaulo cut open the Bol's belly with his knife. Jiro was pulled out alive but still in the crouched position. His limbs had gone numb and soft as he was squeezed inside the belly of the Bol.

Everyone helped gather wood to make a bonfire to warm Jiro.

Soon Jiro was feeling better. Everyone cheered. "Let us celebrate by eating the Bol," they said.

"We should roast it over the fire," said one of them. And that was what everyone did.

As the Bol was roasting over the fire, the people started singing and dancing for Jiro. They were happy.

Engrossed in their singing and dancing Kaulo and his folks did not notice that the Bol was swelling over the fire. It was swelling because of a piece of flesh called 'totale' inside the fish.

Suddenly the 'totale' exploded with a big bang. And all the folks including the children turned into birds.

Kaulo was shocked but felt helpless, having become a bird himself now. He regretted not having cleaned the 'totale' out of the Bol on his own before putting it on fire to cook. Or maybe it was the revenge of the Bol . . . !

Since then the Andamanese do not eat the Bol and have named the birds after their lost folk . . . Kaulo . . . Phatka . . . Benge . . . !

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